



# Trans Student Challenges and Barriers to Study Abroad

Diversity Abroad Conference  
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# LGBTQ Diversity Abroad Task Force

- Sara Bularzik, CAPA International Education
- Luis Legaspi, Programs Abroad Office, UC San Diego
- Christie Johnson, Academic Programs International
- Michael Ballagh, Pitzer College
- Porsha Childs, University of Maryland

# Introduction



# Our Agenda for the Session

- Overview of studies on trans gender students and study abroad
- Preliminary survey
- Research questions and methodology
- 3 constituencies: site directors; lgbtq directors; transgender students
- Best practices in supporting transgender students

# Overview of Literature

- Few studies have specifically examined members of the LGBTQ community and none has focused on transgender students as study abroad participants
- Rankin and Beemyn (2011) found that trans students had hostile perceptions of campus climate and often feared for their safety.
- Seay (2014) reported that most programs and policies have not found systematic ways to respond to the study abroad needs of LGBTQ students.



# Pre-Assessment Survey



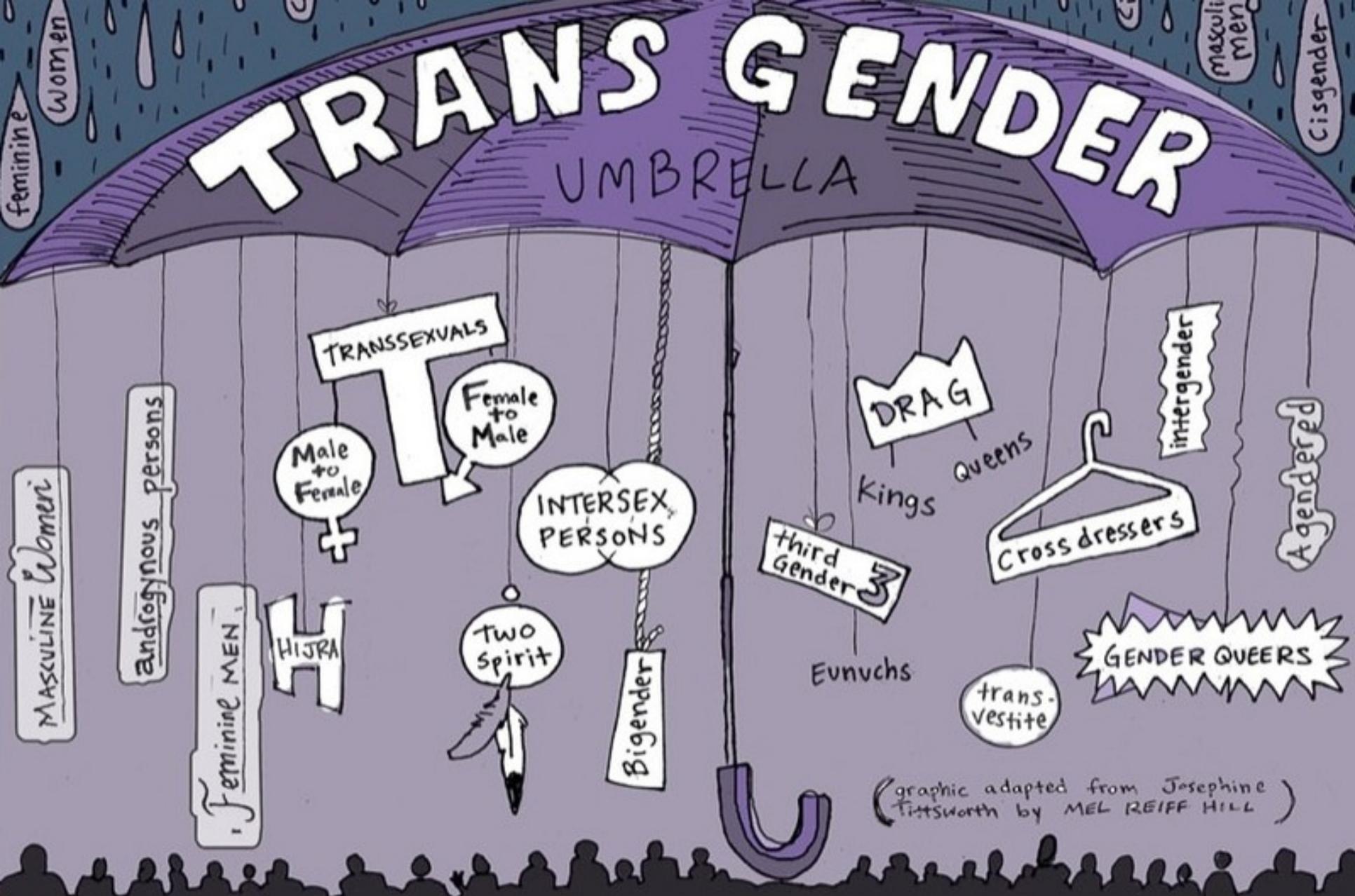
## Instructions:



FREE APP:  
Campus Labs Respond

GENERIC LINK:  
[srs.campuslabs.com](https://srs.campuslabs.com)

1. Download the app on the Apple App Store or Google Play store
2. Enter your name or to be anonymous enter any text
3. Enter the connect ID:  
**4858**



(graphic adapted from Josephine Tinsworth by MEL REIFF HILL)

Encompasses any individual who crosses over or challenges their society's traditional gender roles and/or expressions.

# Methodology

- Our project examines transgender students' experiences with or perceptions of study abroad.
- The study focused on two parallel issues: 1) transgender students' comfort level with study abroad and 2) the ways in which campus support services provide guidance to trans students.
- We collected surveys and conducted qualitative interviews with the following three sample populations: overseas Resident Directors; LGBTQ campus centers; and trans students.



# Research Questions

- 1) To what extent does a student's trans identity determine their program choice, and how would they describe their experience abroad?
- 2) How equipped is the study abroad field to provide valuable resources to trans students?



# Resident Director Surveys

- Surveyed RDs across API, CAPA and Pitzer College programs.
- Responses received from Argentina, Botswana, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, England, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Nepal, Scotland and Spain.
- Of the respondents, only 3 have hosted trans students to date.

# Resident Director Surveys

- Of all countries represented, only Botswana and Nepal do not offer legal protection from discrimination.
- Some legal protections apply only to those post-surgery.
- RDs in all sites were able to identify on-site support networks.
- Noticeable variances in responses within the same country.

# Resident Director Recommendations

- RDs universally welcoming to trans students; expressed concerns regarding potential safety issues, teasing and discrimination.
- Encourage students to share gender identity and relevant concerns prior to departure.
- Housing primary logistical concern; when possible, provide single rooms and/or gender neutral housing.
- Preparation key to manage expectations.
- Key to success: on-site support.

# LGBTQ Center Reflections



- *“We tend to conflate gender and sexuality so while it’s often ok to be gay, people who push the bounds of their masculinity or femininity are somehow perceived as threatening to other people’s gender identity.”*
- *“We really need people in-country to ensure that we have the most accurate info and also can speak to the daily lived experience. It doesn’t matter what your policies are; you can have some really great open policies but that doesn’t mean people aren’t being beaten up in the streets.”*
- *“Our SA offices need to be culturally literate about the experiences of trans students and lgbtq centers need to be able to have real conversations with students.”*
- *“Absolutely critical for us as advisers to understand the difference between sexual minoritized experiences and gender minoritized experiences.”*

# Common Concerns of Trans Students

- Access to hormones abroad
- Obtaining passports that acknowledge their gender identity
- How to pass through airport security
- How to keep their gender and sexuality private
- Misgendering
- Trans students are oftentimes in a state of “survival” mode

# Small Group Discussion

Brainstorm additional recommendations for working with trans students who plan to study abroad.

What action points will you take back to your office?



# Presenter Contact Information

Christie Johnson: [christie.johnson@apiabroad.com](mailto:christie.johnson@apiabroad.com)

Michael Ballagh: [michael\\_ballagh@pitzer.edu](mailto:michael_ballagh@pitzer.edu)

Sara Bularzik: [sbularzik@capa.org](mailto:sbularzik@capa.org)

Luis Legaspi: [llegaspi@ucsd.edu](mailto:llegaspi@ucsd.edu)